



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As shown in Seaport Table 1, the Seaport Labor Market Area seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for January decreased to 4.4 percent from December's rate of 4.6 percent. In January 2000, the rate was 3.7 percent. Total employment in January decreased by 490 jobs, pushing employment in Nez Perce and Asotin counties below the 2000 monthly average of 33,004. Two situations that usually decrease employment in January are reductions in staff after the holiday season, and the slowdown of outdoor work because of bad weather. You would expect that unemployment would increase when employment drops. However, the number of unemployed also decreased in January, creating a decline in the unemployment rate. The *Civilian Labor Force*, which is the total of those employed and unemployed, decreased by 580. This suggests that, at least in January, the labor force and the economy tightened.

In January, Seaport's *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* decreased by 380 from December 2000, and from January 2000 decreased 260. The decrease from December was expected and follows trends for December to January data. The decrease from January of last year continues a trend of decreasing employment from last year. Monthly decreases from last year started in February 2000 and have continued every month since. Usually, in the situation of monthly decreases, an industry or two can be pinpointed as the cause. However, in this case, all industries decreased. This suggests a market decrease. With employment diminishing in neighboring communities, the Lewiston/Clarkston market is feeling the pinch.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LABOR FORCE

In the December 2000 issue of this newsletter, we analyzed labor force data for 2000 and 1999. At the time of publication we projected 2000 data. Since then we've finalized data for 2000, which we have included in Seaport Table 2. A short updated analysis by county is included below.

Clearwater County: The *Civilian Labor Force* decreased in 2000, but the full impact of the closure of the Jaype Mill in Pierce will not show up in the labor force numbers until 2001. Because of the closure and the elimination of 225 high paying jobs, the unemployment rate in 2001 for the county is expected to climb to about 20 percent. In 2000, Clearwater County had the highest unemployment rate among the 44 counties in the state, at 14.3 percent. Em-

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho, and Asotin County, Washington

	Jan 2001*	Dec 2000	Jan 2000	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,040	34,620	34,770	-1.7	-2.1
Unemployment	1,500	1,590	1,270	-5.7	18.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.4	4.6	3.7		
Total Employment	32,540	33,030	33,500	-1.5	-2.9
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,870	34,700	35,100	0.5	-0.7
Unemployment	1,990	1,660	1,670	19.9	19.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.7	4.8	4.8		
Total Employment	32,880	33,040	33,430	-0.5	-1.6
JOB BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	25,220	25,600	25,480	-1.5	-1.0
Goods-Producing Industries	5,090	5,050	5,280	0.8	-3.6
Mining & Construction	1,140	1,190	1,160	-4.2	-1.7
Manufacturing	3,950	3,860	4,120	2.3	-4.1
Food Processing	80	70	140	14.3	-42.9
Lumber & Wood Products	710	730	800	-2.7	-11.3
Paper Products	1,750	1,740	1,830	0.6	-4.4
All Other Manufacturing	1,410	1,320	1,350	6.8	4.4
Service-Producing Industries	20,130	20,540	20,200	-2.0	-0.3
Transportation	1,350	1,350	1,320	0.0	2.3
Communications & Utilities	270	280	290	-3.6	-6.9
Wholesale Trade	1,010	1,030	960	-1.9	5.2
Retail Trade	5,130	5,340	5,180	-3.9	-1.0
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,410	1,400	1,440	0.7	-2.1
Services	6,840	6,810	6,860	0.4	-0.3
Government Administration	1,860	1,850	1,760	0.5	5.7
Government Education	2,260	2,480	2,390	-8.9	-5.4
*Preliminary Estimate					
**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month					

ployment decreases indicate business is suffering from cutbacks in lumber manufacturing and the U.S. Forest Service, both major employment sectors.

Idaho County: Total employment decreased in 2000, by 113 from 1999. Idaho County's economy has lost over 450 jobs from the 1994 record of 5,941. In addition to losses in lumber manufacturing, jobs in *Government* decreased because of cutbacks at the U.S. Forest Service. In *Agriculture*, a major industry, the number of jobs is just one-third of what it was 20 years ago.

Latah County: Unemployment increased in Latah County but it still has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Idaho at 3.4 percent. Employment peaked at 15,707 in 1995 because of growth in *Trade* and *Services*. However, since 1995, employment has decreased 9.3 percent. A significant economic indicator for Latah County is the size of the student population at the University of Idaho. Student enrollment is expected to increase through the year 2001. As a consequence, employment at the U of I is expected to increase one percent in 2001.

Lewis County: Total employment in 2000 decreased from 1999. Employment peaked in 1996 at 1,534 because of increases in *Construction*. *Construction* increased because low land prices allowed people to build houses in Lewis County and commute to work in Lewiston. However, since 1996, employment has decreased 9.2 percent.

Seaport Table 2: 2000 Labor Force Data for Seaport LMA

Latah County	1999	2000	Change	% Change
Civilian Labor Force	14,987	15,164	177	1.2
Unemployment	492	523	31	6.3
Percent Unemployment	3.3	3.4		
Total Employment	14,495	14,641	146	1.0
Lewis County	1999	2000	Change	% Change
Civilian Labor Force	1,560	1,524	-36	-2.3
Unemployment	104	117	13	12.5
Percent Unemployment	6.7	7.7		
Total Employment	1,456	1,407	-49	-3.4
Nez Perce & Asotin Counties	1999	2000	Change	% Change
Civilian Labor Force	35,456	34,487	-969	-2.7
Unemployment	1,337	1,483	146	10.9
Percent Unemployment	3.8	4.3		
Total Employment	34,119	33,004	-1,115	-3.3

Nez Perce & Asotin Counties (Seaport): In Nez Perce and Asotin counties, the *Civilian Labor Force* decreased 2.7 percent in 2000. Total employment decreased 1,115, which increased the unemployment rate in 2000 to 4.3 percent. Nez Perce/Asotin Counties are the perennial growth center of North Central Idaho. There is concern for the economy of North Central Idaho because of recent increases in the unemployment rate.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

North Central Idaho and Clarkston residents could have improved telecommunications services because of the pending sale of local Qwest Communication's exchanges to Citizens Communications. The Idaho Public Utilities Commission is considering requiring a fiber optics line to be constructed throughout North Central Idaho, with part of \$12.4 million Qwest has to pay to benefit rate payers as terms of the sale. About \$7.5 million has already been earmarked to replace an analog telephone switch in Lewiston with a digital one. In addition, Citizens Communications has pledged to spend \$27 million in the first three years of operations to make service better and to introduce new products. Citizens Communications is expected to take control of local phone connections in Clarkston, Lewiston, Grangeville, Cottonwood, Craigmont, Kamiah, Kooskia, Lapwai and Nez Perce in July.

Idaho & Lewis County

- A mine and a gravel bar excavation for gold are being proposed along the Salmon River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality are evaluating proposals to excavate near Riggins on the Salmon River.

Latah County

- Officials at Bennett Lumber have warned employees that large electric rate increases could force a suspension of work at mills in Princeton and Clarkston. Because of the proximity to the Princeton mill, the communities of Potlatch and Harvard would be hit hard economically by the suspension of the area's largest employer.
- Moscow city developers are looking at the industrial area at the south end of the city for development. But exactly what to do with the stretch of property between Henley Street and

Highway 8 along U.S. Highway 95, dubbed the "blighted zone," is still under debate. Private developers have talked about cleaning up the area by building a hotel/convention center.

- A vintage courthouse table is the centerpiece for a new coffeehouse and pub in downtown Moscow. Bucer's is styled after a European café where people can go to relax, sit and converse.

Nez Perce and Asotin (WA) Counties

- Lewiston has been given permission to use the federal grant that was awarded for a business-technology park despite loss of the anchor tenant. The city of Lewiston will go ahead with construction of a business and technology park even though the anchor tenant, Convergys, has dropped out. According to Lewiston Mayor, Jeff Nessel, "We have learned from three prospective new employers that we must address the infrastructure needs and shorten the time it takes for a new company to get operational before business conditions change."
- The Clearwater Lumber Mill at Potlatch Corporation in Lewiston closed temporarily in February, leaving more than 300 Potlatch employees without pay for at least two weeks. The Lewiston mill produces boards, dimension lumber and cedar specialties. The only department that remained open is shipping, so that Potlatch's customers could continue to purchase products. Potlatch also has been facing high electricity costs. Prices have remained at levels similar to or higher than they were in December when Potlatch closed parts of the plant for four days.

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